



NEWS RELEASE

OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY
WESTERN DISTRICT OF MISSOURI

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

(NOTE: Comments from U.S. Attorney Todd P. Graves will be available to download as an MP3 digital audio file from the district's Web site, www.usdoj.gov/usao/mow)

FORMER PARAMEDIC SENTENCED FOR DILUTING AMBULANCE PAINKILLERS

KANSAS CITY, Mo. – Todd P. Graves, United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, announced that a former paramedic who worked for several Northland ambulance services was sentenced in federal court today for diluting pain-relieving drugs supplied to an ambulance service in Pleasant Valley, Mo.

Craig J. Starr, 40, of Liberty, Mo., was sentenced by U.S. District Judge Gary A. Fenner this morning to five years and three months in federal prison without parole. **Starr**, who formerly worked as a paramedic for ambulance services in Pleasant Valley, Liberty and Claycomo, Mo., will self-surrender on June 28, 2004, to begin serving his sentence.

On Jan. 26, 2004, **Starr** pleaded guilty to two counts of tampering with consumer products. Those charges were contained in an indictment returned by a federal grand jury on Aug. 19, 2003.

Starr admitted that on two occasions between Sept. 12, 2002, and Jan. 13, 2003, he tampered with Demerol 100mg/ml carpulets (or vials) by removing the pain-relieving drug from the carpulets and substituting another substance in its place. As a result of **Starr's** tampering, Graves said, the potency and strength of the Demerol in the carpulets was reduced from 100mg/ml to an undetectable amount.

"Starr abused his position of trust and jeopardized the health and well-being of ambulance patients under his care," Graves said. "Whether or not any patient actually received the diluted vials of Demerol, **Starr's** conduct was reprehensible. I am satisfied that **Starr** will be

held accountable for his illegal actions.”

By pleading guilty, **Starr** acknowledged that his actions were done with reckless disregard for, and extreme indifference to, the risk that another person would be placed in danger of death or bodily injury.

According to Graves, there is no evidence or allegation that **Starr** attempted to illegally sell Demerol to anyone else. “**Starr** was using the painkiller to treat symptoms of his own medical condition,” Graves explained.

Both instances of tampering, Graves added, involved painkillers supplied to ambulances serving Pleasant Valley.

This case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Gregg R. Coonrod. It was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Drug Enforcement Administration, the Missouri Department of Health Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs, the Liberty, Mo., Police Department, the Pleasant Valley, Mo., Police Department, and the Claycomo, Mo., Police Department.

This news release, as well as additional information about the office of the United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, is available on-line at

www.usdoj.gov/usao/mow